

## ***The Learning of Punjabi by Punjabi Muslims: A Historical Account***

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Punjabi language has never been used in the official domains of power or taught at a high level, or in its own right, before the coming of the British. However, there is evidence that at the primary level, children were taught some books in Punjabi. The evidence about Punjabi being taught at some level comes from *Heer Ranjha*, the famous tale of two lovers in verse narrated by Waris Shah among others.<sup>1</sup> The lines from *Heer* are as follows:

*Parhan fazil dars durvesh musti khoob kadh alhan parkaria neen  
Taleel, Meezan te Sarf Bahai, Sarf-e meer bhi yad pukaria neen  
Qazi, Qutab te kanz, Anwa Baran, Mas'oodian jald savaria neen.*

*Iknazam de Dars harkaran parhde nam-e Haq a te Khaliq Barian neen  
Gulistan, Bostan nal Bahar Danish, Tooti nama te Raziq Barian neen  
Minsha'at Nisab te Abul Fazlan, shahnamion, Wahid Barian neen.<sup>2</sup>*

Although these books were meant to teach Persian or the rudiments of Islam, they used Punjabi as the language of explanation. This tradition had been established by Abu Nasr Farahi when he wrote his *Nisab-ul Sabiyan* in 617 A.H in Persian to teach Arabic to Afghan children. A number of such *nisab*, including one by Amir Khusro, were written upto the tenth century. Hindi *nisab* came to be written 'probably from 10th

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1. G.M.D. Sufi, *Al-Manhaj Being the Evolution of Curriculum in the Muslim Educational Institutions of India* (Delhi: Idarah-i Adbiyat-i Dilli, 1977), 108.
2. Shareef Sabir (ed.), *Heer Waris Shah* (Lahore: Waris Shah Memorial Committee, N.d.), 16.

